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Labour will force everyone to give fingerprints at ID card interview centres

By Patrick Hennessy, Political Editor, Sunday Telegraph

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Ministers plan to force all adults to travel miles at their own expense to fingerprint scanning units so their details can go onto an identity card database. From 2009, everyone will have to attend one of 69 "interview centres", whose locations are revealed today for the first time.

People without their own transport, such as the elderly and the less well off, will be hit hardest by having to make round trips that in some cases will be more than 100 miles. Somebody living in Cambridge would be forced to make a 62-mile round trip to Bury St Edmunds, while people in Blackpool would have to travel 54 miles to Blackburn and back. In Stranraer, residents face a 128-mile round trip to Kilmarnock.



When people apply for an ID card, fingerprint data will be stored in the National Identity Register

The revelations are the latest blow for the Government's crisis-hit ID card scheme. Ministers claim the scheme, which will see the first cards issued in two years' time, will cost £5.4 billion, although experts at the London School of Economics say the total bill could be £19.3 billion. Biometric passports, which hold similar personal details to ID cards, will be issued later this year. There will then be a two-year period during which people will be able to apply for a passport without also being forced to apply for an ID card.

From 2010, all passport applicants, even if they are simply renewing their old one, will also have to apply for an identity card.

Last night David Davis, the shadow home secretary, branded the latest revelations an "outrage" and repeated the Conservative pledge to abolish ID cards, which he dubbed the "plastic poll tax".

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Labour also wants all first-time applicants for a British passport to travel to the same 69 centres for interview, when they will be asked about things like previous addresses and bank accounts.

If the party wins the next election, it will make ID cards compulsory for all British citizens over the age of 16, whether they have a passport or not. In its ID cards "Action Plan", the Government has confirmed that when people are forced to enrol for an ID card, "fingerprint biometrics (for all 10 fingerprints) will be recorded and stored in the National Identity Register". It is possible that iris scans will also be taken. Ministers also published a report to Parliament on the cost of the scheme last October, which did not include plans to cover interview costs.

Mr Davis said: "It is bad enough that we will be forced to pay for an ID card, but to have to pay to go to a Government centre to be interviewed and fingerprinted is an outrage.

"These costs will hit low-income families and pensioners, who might otherwise not want passports, hardest. Conservatives will abolish this costly plastic poll tax. It will hit the taxpayer, not the terrorists."

The 69 locations for interview centres are: Aberdeen, Aberystwyth, Andover, Armagh, Barnstaple, Belfast, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Birmingham, Blackburn, Boston, Bournemouth, Bristol, Bury St Edmunds, Camborne, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Cheltenham, Coleraine, Crawley, Derby, Dover, Dumfries, Dundee, Edinburgh, Exeter, Galashiels, Glasgow, Hastings, Hull, Inverness, Ipswich, Kendal, Kilmarnock, Kings Lynn, Leeds, Leicester, Lincoln, Liverpool, London, Luton, Maidstone, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Newport, Newport (Isle of Wight), Northallerton, Northampton, Norwich, Oban, Omagh, Oxford, Peterborough, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Reading, Scarborough, Shrewsbury, Sheffield, St Austell, Stirling, Stoke-on-Trent, Swansea, Swindon, Warwick, Wick, Wrexham, Yeovil and York.

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